

# NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

THE PANEL'S CRITIQUE

BLOCKS 4 AND 5 SECTION 38 CAMPBELL  
(FOOTHILLS)



Australian Government  
National Capital Authority



**ACT**  
Government

# NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

## THE PANEL'S CRITIQUE

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Project: Foothills - Blocks 4 and 5 Section 38 Campbell

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Date: Wednesday 22 May 2019

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Meeting location: Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG),  
Cnr. London Circuit and Civic Square, Canberra City

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Proponent: Doma Group/Stewart Architecture

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Observers: Representatives from the:  
Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)  
National Capital Authority (NCA)

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Conflicts of interest: None

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MEETING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

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Property address: 38 Limestone Avenue, Campbell (Block 4 & 5 Section 38)

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Proposal: The proposal was initially presented to the NCDRP on 10 April 2019. This advice is in response to the second design review of the proposal.

The proposed development, known as Foothills, is located adjacent to Limestone Avenue and Ainslie Avenue, and is bordered by Campbell High School to the south, environmentally sensitive vacant Territory land to the north, Ainslie Village and Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve in Central Canberra to the east. The site is over 40,000sqm and is subject to an approved Development Control Plan (DCP) that anticipates up to 60,000sqm of development. The proposal is below this anticipated yield.

The proposal yield has been brought down significantly to provide greater dwelling choice along with open space and amenity.

The proposal includes two 8 storey apartment buildings with two levels of basement parking and approximately 129 townhouses. Approximately 4,500m<sup>2</sup> of communal open space and 14,000m<sup>2</sup> of private open space is provided across the site.

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Proponents' representative address to the panel: The design team provided an overview of the progress made on the proposal and the community consultation that had been undertaken since the first presentation to the NCDRP. It was noted that the concept plan was subject to approval by the NCA with an amendment to the existing Development Control Plan (DCP) being proposed. The presentation focussed on the key issues raised by the panel on 10 April 2019 as follows:

**Site context and the Bush Capital:** Stewart Architecture outlined the additional site analysis that had been undertaken to better understand the potential visual impacts of the development on to the broader landscape setting. This included a view analysis from Red Hill, Mt Ainslie, Parliament House and Black Mountain. Views along Limestone Avenue and from the Australian War Memorial were also assessed. The view from Mt Ainslie was noted as being of particular interest due to the landscaping within the proposed development aligning with the broader street network.

**Streetscape, public domain, landscape and interface:** Landscaping within the site was discussed with deciduous tree plantings proposed on internal streets. Native plantings, including eucalypts, were proposed at the edges of the site to soften the development as viewed from outside of the site and to reflect the existing vegetation in the adjacent Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve.

Details of the retaining walls and associated landscaping were illustrated for the Limestone Avenue frontage through a series of sketch cross-sections. A 1.8 metre wall is proposed to manage the level changes from the verge to the apartment buildings, pool and associated communal spaces. A 15 metre setback is proposed for the apartment buildings from Limestone Avenue.

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The proposed boundary fence/wall was further developed to include palisade (open) fencing at the interfaces between the communal areas within the site and the landscape areas outside of the site. The revised fencing was described as providing a blending of landscape at the edge of the development site with visual connections into the proposed development along 'landscape corridors'. The proposal for a solid wall/fencing was maintained for areas where privacy was required, including for private open spaces that are located at the edge of the site. Approximately 33% of the site was identified as being deep root planting areas with tree species selected to grow up to an approximate height of a five storey building.

**Sustainability and solar access:** The impact of overshadowing for neighbouring properties was presented. It was noted there has been further consultation with Campbell High School who have stated their general support for the development proposal. The presentation demonstrated that there is minimal overshadowing on the playing fields and sports grounds in winter. Some overshadowing of the existing houses on the western side of Limestone Avenue was identified in the presentation at 9am, with the shadow moving away from the existing houses by 9:20 – 9:30am.

**Car parking and access:** Car parking and access was presented using the site plans and a pedestrian access plan. Stewart Architecture retained similar access provisions from the previous proposal as it was considered by the design team to be important to the broader scheme with the main pedestrian movement along the 'main street', between communal facilities of the pool to the west and the park to the east. It was presented that all pedestrian paths would encourage walking, achieving a grade of 1 in 20.

**Site planning and built form:** The site planning and built form was presented, which retained the general layout and proposed built forms that was presented to the NCDRP on 10 April 2019. Stewart Architecture outlined that they had explored further opportunities for taller buildings and potential locations, as suggested by the panel, including opportunities for roof gardens. However, the proponent outlined that doing this could create overlooking/interface issues for some sites. It was considered that the market response for townhouses was also stronger at present and a preferred development type in this location. The general design aesthetics of the buildings were described as providing a solid base, with a 'lighter' architectural expression at the upper floors.

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Site inspection: Wednesday 10 April 2019

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Recommendation: Based on the documentation provided prior to the design review panel session, the proponents presentation and response to the Panel's Advice from 10 April 2019, the following comments and recommendations are provided:

The panel takes this opportunity to thank the design team for delivering a clear and informative presentation which responded to a number of key issues and recommendations provided in the previous Panel's Advice.

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While in its early conception, the panel supports the broad proposal for a predominately low scale, medium density residential development in this location as it provides access to the Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve and within walking distance to the city centre.

The panel acknowledges that this proposal is being prepared as a concept plan to inform the future design and community consultation for the site. However, the panel also recognises the importance of clearly communicating the vision for the site and the need to resolve key strategic planning and design issues, before the proposal can be further developed. This includes providing a greater resolution of building interface between buildings, streets and communal open spaces; character and function of communal open spaces; character and function of the main street and surface parking areas; basement parking areas and deep root planting areas; and pedestrian amenity and safety through the site.

To strengthen the proposal and address the above strategic planning and design issues, the panel recommends that the proponent prepare clear documentation and additional materials, including:

- **Perspective views:** in the main street and the public spaces including the plaza to illustrate the pedestrian environment proposed for these spaces.
- **Car parking plan, combined with deep root planting zones:** clearly identify the proposed location of basements and opportunities for retention of existing remnant trees and new plantings of large trees within the site.
- **Plans and sections to clearly indicate level changes:** the panel understand that there is approximately a 14 metre level change across the site. The plans currently read as a flat site, which makes it difficult to communicate and have confidence that the levels can be appropriately managed across the site while also accommodating the development as proposed. This exercise will also assist in resolution of interface between buildings, streetscape experience, landscaping and safe pedestrian access.
- **Materials board:** to explain the material typology and expression for the apartment buildings and particularly the townhouses.

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### Key issues and recommendations:

The *Key Issues and Recommendations* provide detail advice to the proponent, consistent with the above recommendation.

To achieve the best possible design outcome for the proposal, the proponent is encouraged to consider the following issues through the next stages of the design development:

#### **1.0 Site context and the Bush Capital**

1.1 The panel appreciate the presentation on the visual analysis which responds to the NCDRP's previous advice and provided further information about how the proposal sits within the surrounding landscape context. The panel agrees that the main street tree plantings and landscaping, as viewed from Mt Ainslie, has the potential to provide a positive contribution towards the broader landscape setting. Consideration of a large tree species to the main street will help to further reinforce this outcome. A tree species similar in height and scale to Pin Oaks is recommended.

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- 1.2 The panel previously expressed concern for the inherent qualities of the site that have not yet been realised in the proposed landscape design, specifically retention of the large remnant eucalypts, management of the level changes and the existing limestone outcrops. This issue remains as it is considered an important consideration at the concept plan stage. The panel recommends that the proponent further explore opportunities to integrate these existing site features as part of the common open space network. Ensuring that key features of the site are better integrated with the broader design of the proposal will result in a greater contextual response for the proposal.

### **2.0 Streetscape, public domain, landscape and interface**

- 2.1 The panel thanks the proponent for providing the site cross sections that have assisted the panel to understand the proposed level changes and landscape transitions from the Limestone Avenue to the proposed apartment buildings. The panel recommends that, where possible, the proposed 1.8 metre high wall be terraced to two 900mm high walls as this will provide a 'softer' landscape quality to the Limestone Avenue frontage and remove requirements for a balustrade at the top of the wall.
  - 2.2 The panel recommends progressing the site sections in further detail, together with detailed plan view, to explore and better understand if an encroachment for the basement and swimming pool is an appropriate outcome in this location. The documentation provided to the panel was unclear about where basements, deep root planting areas and existing remnant trees are located. This makes it difficult for the panel to provide more guidance on this issue.
  - 2.3 The panel thanks the proponent for providing a pedestrian circulation plan. However, the plan alone doesn't adequately address the previous advice to also understand what the character of the open spaces are. Noting that the proposal is currently at a concept plan stage, the panel recommends that the proponent further develop the pedestrian network and provide supporting perspectives to illustrate the potential character of these spaces. This exercise will assist in achieving high quality outcomes for the pedestrian realm. Particular attention should be provided to the proposed central "street" to ensure that buildings are mostly at grade with the street and provide building entrances and windows to assist in creating an active and safe pedestrian space.
  - 2.4 The panel support the proposal of additional native trees to be planted informally at the edges of the site and outside of the block boundary to 'soften' the edges of the site and provide a transition between the external landscape context and the site. The panel would anticipate native tree species capable of growing to a scale of between 15 and 20m and which integrate the site with its surroundings. Similarly, the panel supports the proposal to integrate a variety of fence treatments at the edges of the site to provide some transparency and visibility into the development.
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2.5 The panel supports the proposal for a minimum deep root planting area across the site of 33%. The panel recommends further work is undertaken to demonstrate this is possible with a plan and/or sections to better communicate changes in levels, car parking layout, built form footprint and deep-rooted planting zones.

2.6 The panel understand that the landscape plans propose Zelkova species close to the entrance and Chinese Elms along the main street. The panel supports the intention to provide large trees on site and encourages the proponent to consider alternative tree species that will mature to a taller height, such as Pin Oaks and other similar scale varieties. This is important particularly for the areas close to the apartments, along the main street and in the common areas to provide an appropriate sense of scale and context.

### **3.0 Car parking and pedestrian and cycle access**

3.1 The panel supports the priority for the site to be a high-quality pedestrian environment and considers that further work is needed to ensure the pedestrian experience is promoted through the central main street. Noting the proposal is at a concept plan stage, it remains important to demonstrate that there is enough room for pedestrian footpaths adjacent car parking and visibility to ensure passive surveillance and safety. The panel recommends that the proponent continues to develop the plans and cross sections through the site to better understand and resolve issues associated with level changes through the site, interface issues between buildings, streetscape experience, opportunities for landscaping and access. The panel suggests preparation of perspective drawings to help communicate this and realise the broader vision for the site.

3.2 The panel is supportive of the vehicle parking, waste management and access strategies proposed and presented at both design review panel sessions. However, the panel remains concerned about the potential interface outcomes between pedestrian pathways and how they interface with the proposed vehicle parking. The proponent is requested to continue to develop the concept plan to demonstrate how the interface and relationship between dwellings in vehicle zones will be designed and managed to promote a high quality pedestrian environment in the site.

### **4.0 Site planning and built form**

The panel broadly supports the built form proposal that provides a mix of apartments and townhouses. However, the panel questions the proposed siting and orientation of the buildings and communal facilities (such as the tennis court) that appear to be 'tightly' arranged in some areas of the site. To address this in the concept plan, the panel recommends the proponent prepare plans to provide some clarity of key issues including interface and grade separation between buildings. Further development of the proposed materiality of the buildings and landscape spaces will also assist in resolving these issues and will ultimately strengthen the proposal.

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### **Supplementary material provided 29 May 2019**

- 4.1 Supplementary material was provided by the proponent on Wednesday 29 May 2019 in response to the design review panel session.
- 4.2 The materials were provided to the panel members for a preliminary appraisal. In summary, the panel considers that the supplementary material explores some of the concerns raised by the DRP that are captured below, including items 2.3, 3.1 and 3.2.
- 4.3 In particular, the supplementary materials illustrate how the master planning of the main street, apartment forecourt and precinct entry way is of a scale which supports layering of urban space and appropriate landscape and pedestrian amenity. The level changes also appear to aid dwelling privacy, where needed, with the elevated townhouses being separated from the street below. Conversely, the interface with the main street is clearer with the semi-public spaces being connected to the main street and evidence of façade articulation to the buildings.
- 4.4 While it would have been beneficial that these materials be presented to the panel on 22 May 2019, they are viewed by the panel as a positive inclusion to the concept plan.



